

Department of
LABOR AND
INDUSTRIES



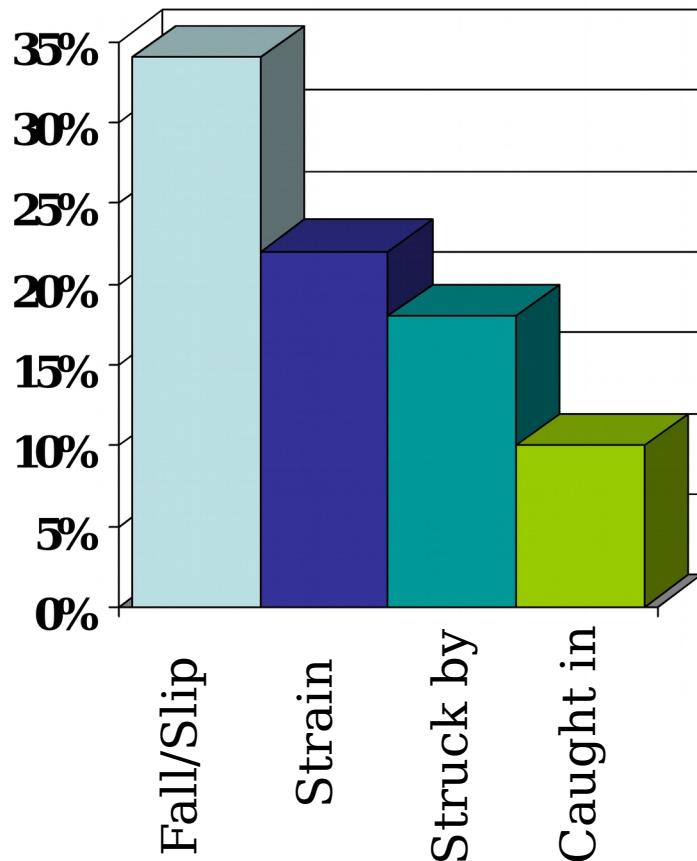
Office Safety and Health



Overview of Office Hazards

- Many hazards which cause thousands of injuries and health problems annually exist in the office.
- In addition to the obvious hazards of slippery floors or open file drawers, the modern office may contain hazards such as poor lighting, noise, and poorly designed furniture and equipment.

Leading Types of Disabling Accidents in Offices



- Office workers sustain approximately 76,000 fractures, dislocations, sprains, strains and contusions annually.
- Leading types of disabling office accidents are:
 - Falls and slips
 - Strains and over-exertion
 - Struck by or striking against objects
 - Caught in or between objects

Common Office Safety and Health Hazards

Some of the common office hazards relate to:

- Physical layout and housekeeping
- Exits and egress
- Fire hazards
- Handling and storage
- Office furniture
- Electrical equipment
- Office machinery/tools
- Computer Terminals
- Ventilation
- Illumination
- Noise
- Stress

Physical Layout and Housekeeping Hazards

- Poor design or poor housekeeping can lead to:

- Crowding,
- Lack of privacy,
- Slips, trips and falls



Physical Layout/Housekeeping Controls

Important factors related to office layout and orderliness include:

- Maintain at least 3 feet distance between desks; at least 50 square feet per employee.
- Keep telephone and electrical cords out of aisles and walkways.



Cords create tripping hazards

Physical Layout/Housekeeping Controls (cont'd.)

- Office machines should be kept away from edges of desks and tables.
- Regularly inspect, and repair or replace faulty carpeting.
- Remove excess debris from the work area.
- Clean up spills promptly.



Excess debris in work area

Exits and Egress Hazards

- Blocked or improperly planned means of egress can lead to injuries as a result of slips, trips, and falls.
- If employees become trapped during an emergency due to improper egress, more serious injuries or fatalities can result.



**Blocked
exit**

Exits and Egress Hazard Controls

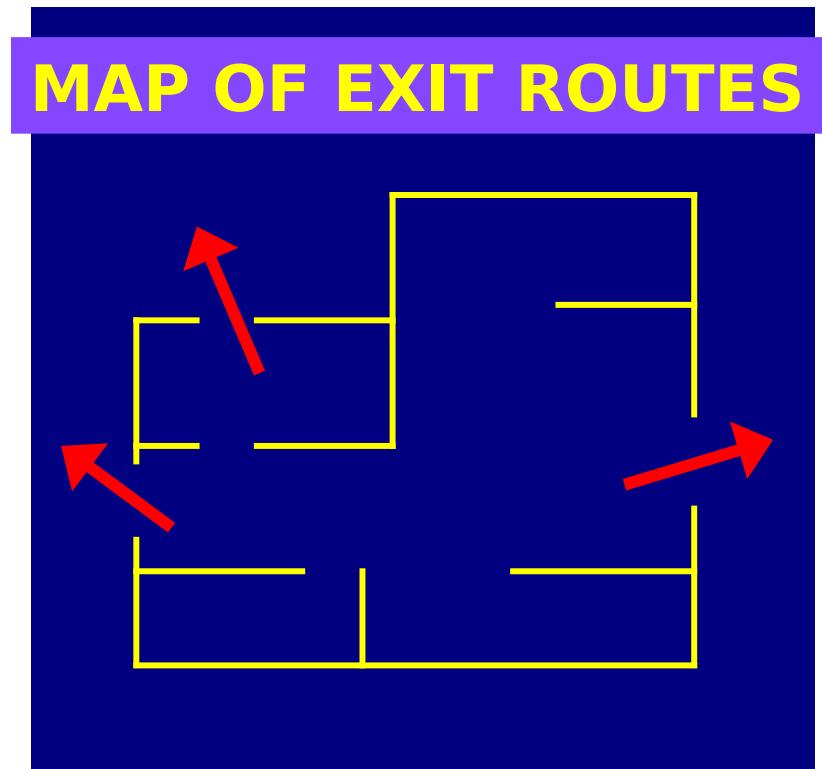
Controls to ensure proper and safe means of egress include:

- Minimum access to exit width of 28 inches.
- Generally, two exits should be provided.
- Exits and access to exits must be marked.



Exits and Egress Hazard Controls

- Means of egress, including stairways used for emergency exit, should be free of obstructions and adequately lit.
- Employees must be aware of exits and trained in evacuation procedures.



Fire Hazards

- A serious problem associated with office design is the potential for fire hazards.
- Offices contain large amounts of combustible materials, such as paper, furniture and carpeting, which can easily ignite and emit toxic fumes.



Fire Hazard Controls

To reduce office fire hazards:

- Fire extinguishers and alarms must be conspicuously placed and accessible.
- Store excess paper materials inside cabinets, files or lockers.
- Use flame retardant materials.



Blocked fire extinguisher

Handling and Storage Hazards

- Improper lifting of materials can cause musculoskeletal disorders such as sprains, strains, and inflamed joints.
- Office materials that are improperly stored can lead to hazards such as objects falling on workers, poor visibility, and fires.



Improper storage

Handling and Storage Hazard Controls

Some controls to reduce handling and storage hazards include:

- An effective ergonomic control program incorporating employee awareness and training and ergonomic design of work tasks.
- No storage of materials on top of cabinets or in aisles or walkways.
- Heavy objects stored on lower shelves and materials stacked neatly.
- Flammable and combustible materials identified and properly stored.

Office Furniture Hazards

Serious injuries can result from:

- Defective furniture
- Misuse of chairs, desks, or file cabinets
- Improper use of ladders and stools



Office Furniture Hazard Controls

Chairs

- Do not climb on any office chair; use a ladder or stool.
- Chairs should be properly designed and regularly inspected for missing casters and loose parts.



Defective caster

Office Furniture Hazard Controls (cont'd.)

- Don't lean back in an office chair with your feet up.
- Don't scoot across the floor while sitting in a chair.



Office Furniture Hazard Controls (continued)

File cabinets

- Open only one file drawer at a time.
- Do not locate file cabinets close to doorways or in aisles.
- Use drawer handles to close file drawers.



OUCH!
!

Office Furniture Hazard Controls (cont'd.)

Desks

- Keep desks in good condition - free from sharp edges, nails, etc.
- Ensure that glass-top desks do not have sharp edges.
- Keep desk drawers closed when not in use.

Office Furniture Hazard Controls (cont'd.)

Ladders

- Ensure that ladder is in good condition and inspected regularly.
- Do not use the top of a ladder as a step.
- Be sure ladder is fully open and the spreaders are locked.
- Place the ladder on slip-free surface.
- Keep area around ladder free of debris.



Electrical Hazards

Electrical accidents in offices usually occur as a result of:

- Faulty or defective equipment
- Unsafe installation, or
- Misuse of equipment



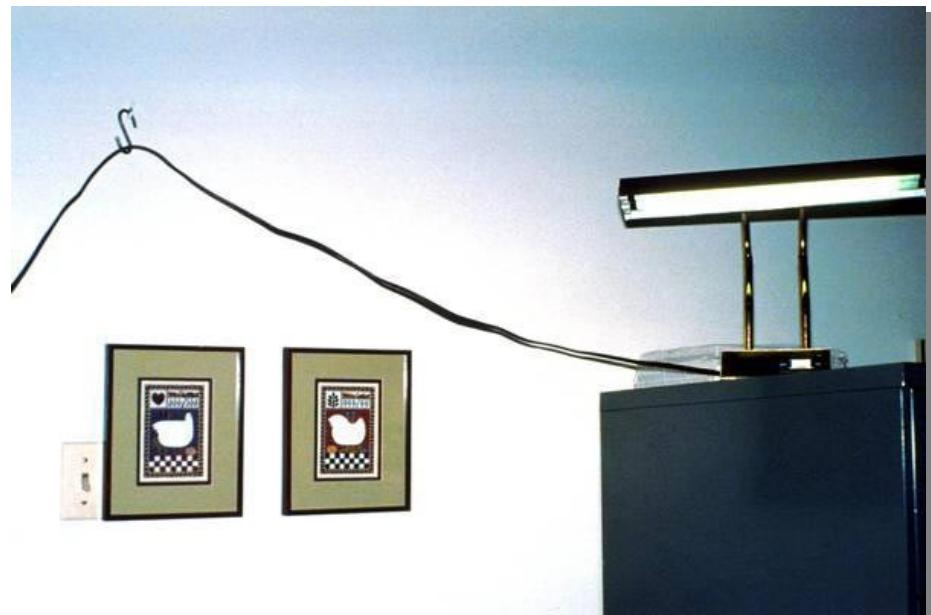
Electrical Hazard Controls

- Equipment must be properly grounded to prevent shock injuries.
- A sufficient number of outlets will prevent overloading of circuits.
- Poorly maintained or non-approved equipment should not be used.



Electrical Hazard Controls (cont'd.)

- Cords should not be dragged over nails, hooks, or other sharp objects.
- Receptacles must be installed and equipment maintained so that no live electrical parts are exposed.



Electrical Hazard Controls (cont'd.)

- Machines must be disconnected before cleaning or adjusting.
- Generally, machines and equipment must be locked or tagged out during maintenance.



Office Machinery and Tool Hazards

- Office machines with hazardous moving parts, such as electric hole punches and paper shredders can cause lacerations, abrasions and fractures.
- Misuse of office tools, such as pens, pencils, paper, letter openers, scissors and staplers can cause cuts, punctures and related infections.



Office Machinery and Tool Hazards (continued)

- Photocopying machines
 - Hazards may include excessive noise and intense light.
 - During repair or troubleshooting, some parts of the copier may be hot.



Office Machinery and Tool Hazard Controls (continued)

Take precautions when using photocopying machines.

- Keep the document cover closed.
- Reduce noise exposure by isolating the machine.
- Have machines serviced routinely.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for troubleshooting.

Office Machinery and Tool Hazard Controls

- Machines with nip points or rotating parts must be guarded so that office workers cannot contact the moving parts.
- Secure machines that tend to move during operation.
- Avoid wearing long or loose clothing or accessories around machinery with moving parts.

Office Machinery and Tool Hazard Controls (continued)

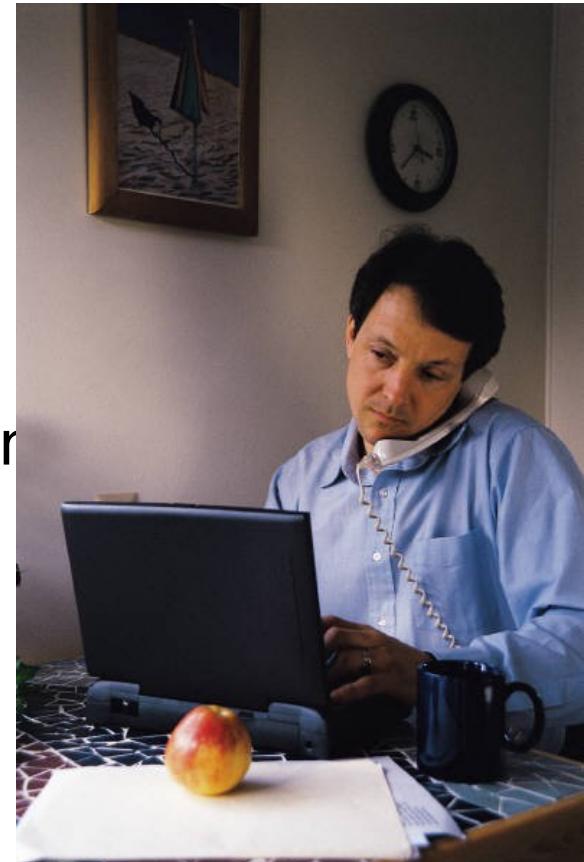
- Paper cutters
 - Keep blade closed when not in use.
 - A guard should be provided and fingers kept clear.
- Staplers
 - Always use a stapler remover.
 - Never test a jammed stapler with your thumb.
- Pencils, pens, scissors
 - Store sharp objects in a drawer or with the point down.



Computer Monitors & Work Station Arrangement

Health concerns of computer monitors involve:

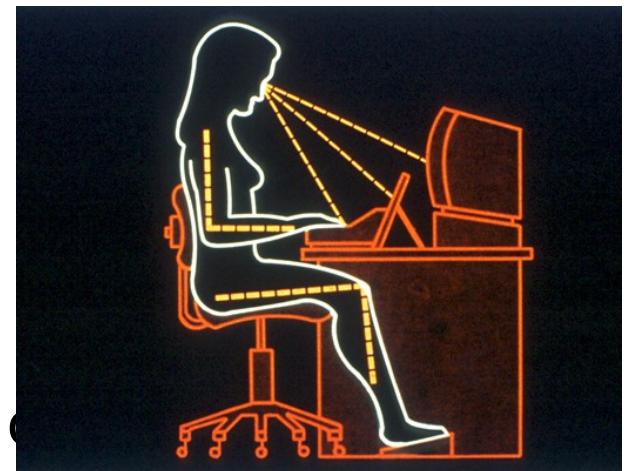
- Eye irritation
- Low back, neck, and shoulder pain
- Cumulative trauma disorders, such as carpal tunnel syndrome
- Stress



A candidate for neck pain

Computer Workstation Design

- Proper ergonomic design should be tailored to prevent discomfort.
- Factors to consider include:
 - Relation of operator to screen
 - Operator's posture
 - Lighting and background
 - Keyboard position
 - Chair height
 - Document holder
 - Screen design, characters and contrast



Example of Poor Computer Design



Ventilation

- Sources of air pollution in the office include both natural agents (e.g., mold spores) and synthetic chemicals (e.g., cleaning fluids).
- An adequate ventilation system which delivers quality indoor air and provides comfortable humidity and temperature is a necessity.
- Office machines and ventilation system components should be checked and maintained on a regular basis.



Illumination

- Lighting problems in the office include:
 - Glare
 - Eyestrain
 - Fatigue
 - Double-vision
- Poor lighting can be a contributing factor in accidents.



Illumination Controls

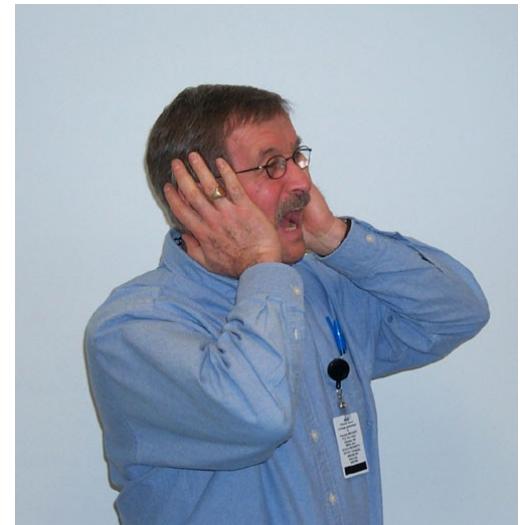
- Controls include:
 - Regular maintenance of the lighting system
 - Light-colored matte finish on walls and ceilings to reduce glare
 - Adjustable shades on windows
 - Indirect or task lighting



Task
Lighting

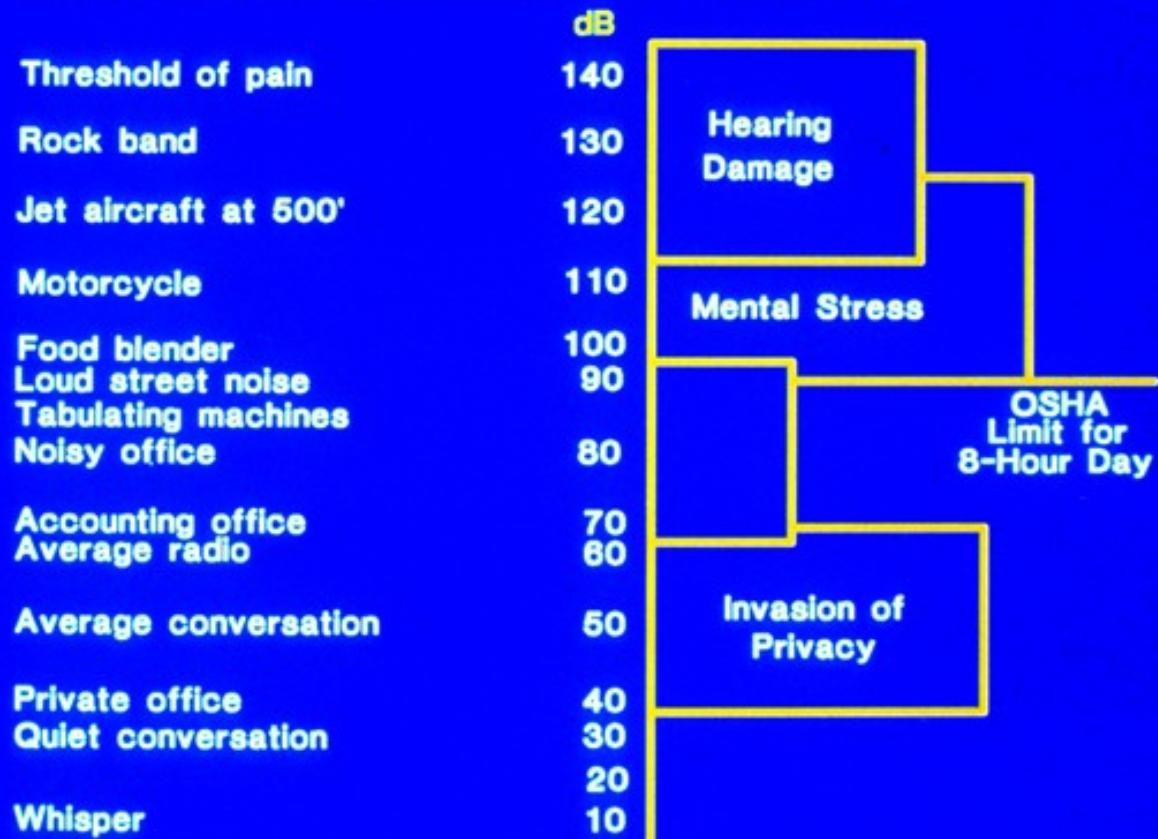
Noise

- Noise sources in the office include:
 - Printers, and other office machines
 - Telephones
 - Human voices
- High noise can produce tension and stress, as well as damage hearing.



Office Noise

Noise and Its Effects in Offices



Controls for Noise

- Noisy machines should be placed in an enclosed space.
- Carpeting, draperies, and acoustical ceiling tiles should be used to muffle noise.
- Telephone volume should be adjusted to its lowest level.
- Traffic routes in the office should be arranged to reduce traffic within and between work areas.

Additional Information



For a copy of our publication on office ergonomics
click below:

lni.wa.gov/IPUB/417-133-000.pdf

More information on workplace safety and health is available on the WISHA webpage at: www.lni.wa.gov

For additional assistance, you can call one of our consultants. Click below for local L & I office locations:

http://www.lni.wa.gov/wisha/consultation/regional_consultants.htm

Thank you for taking the time to learn about safety and health and how to prevent injuries and illnesses.

